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Authentic Materials:

An Educator's Guide to Their Use in the Language Classroom

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Chapter I – Introduction

The issue of authentic language use in language teaching and learning has been on my mind for many years. Personally, I have always been a reader, and this naturally carried over as I began learning language. When I started my own language learning in middle school and high school, a little French, but mostly Japanese, I found myself frustrated at the language I was learning. I was learning grammar patterns and reading stilted textbook language, and I didn't feel comfortable doing even that. I wasn't a literate reader. This was especially infuriating when I travelled to Japan to study for a year of my undergraduate work. Even after four years of language instruction, I had trouble understanding even simple documents like menus at restaurants. It made me feel confused and unprepared. I still don't feel completely comfortable reading in Japanese. This carried over to my language teaching.

In Japan, after a few months, I was teaching one week per month, as a guest instructor at a language school, brought in to provide students with a native

speaker, as if my own English skills would transfer to the students by my mere presence in the classroom. At the time, I hadn't taught before, and had only a single undergraduate class in foreign language teaching as my background experience. I was told to stick to the textbooks and vary as little as possible from them. Even from the little I had read and studied on language teaching, I was shocked by the textbook language. There was little context for the content in the book, and the activities consisted mostly of vocabulary drills using pre-set language patterns that I'd never heard from native speakers.

I was teaching students of all ages, from four to sixty, in classes organized by age (for children) or profession (for adults). Without the explicit grammatical knowledge I now have, all I could supplement the children with was more authentic vocabulary, and I supplemented the materials with which I taught the adults and the teenagers by introducing about ten minutes of conversation at the beginning of each lesson. Neither of these were frowned upon by the teacher leading the classes, however, they certainly weren't encouraged either.

I noticed right away that all of the students in all of the classes were much more engaged during conversation, or when I was introducing vocabulary that was personally relevant to their own lives. I found myself increasingly engaging in communicative activities with my students, outside of the textbook, as they were becoming engaged in relating themselves to me and to each other in their language learning. I don't think, at the time, using authentic texts even occurred to me,

although if it had been a possibility in that teaching situation, I believe I might have tried to bring them into my classroom earlier.

I left that job near the end of my undergraduate work, to return to the United States. When I finished my undergraduate work, I started my graduate work in TESOL. I landed an assistanceship teaching at my university's Intensive English Program, to pay for my studies, and fortuitously, my first class was a reading class, of high-intermediate level, to be exact.

I jumped right into authentic text usage, head first, as it were, with *Catcher in the Rye*, perhaps not the best choice, due to a range of factors from foul language to out-of-date language, but I still found a good number of my students affectively engaging in the text, finding parallels in their own lives and cultures, and discussing their own thoughts and emotions in relation to the text. This was especially notable for an 8:00 AM class, although I didn't know it at the time. I was answering vocabulary questions and helping students to understand the cultural references in the text, bringing in cultural artifacts that related to the story, and getting all-around excited about teaching it, myself.

From then on, I was hooked. I started using authentic materials in all my classes. I would bring in textbook excerpts to practice reading skills in my reading class. I was taking newspaper articles to speaking classes to facilitate discussions, using restaurant menus for role-plays. I brought short stories to my writing classes for summary and response essays. Now I'm bringing in short stories, essays, speech

transcripts, and newspaper articles to my grammar class to look at the different ways authors use grammar to express themselves. There's just no end to it. It's something I love to do, and it's something my students, for the most part, enjoy working with, examining, and relating to, themselves.

When it came time to work on this project, there was no doubt in my mind that I would put something together relating to authentic texts. I love using authentic texts, my students love using authentic texts, and I wanted to bring that same enthusiasm to as many classrooms as I could, so it was frankly impossible to come to any conclusion but writing this: a guide to using Authentic Texts in the language classroom. My hope is that I will both inspire some pre-service or in-service teachers to use more authentic texts, and that I can show them how to do so effectively for multiple purposes: Reading Skills, Grammar, and Culture.

Flashing forward to something more recent, I attended the AAAL and TESOL 2009 conferences in Denver, and one issue was spread through both conferences equally, the problem of uniting Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and language teaching pedagogy. Rod Ellis, at his plenary speech at AAAL, brought up the fact that from the beginning, pedagogy and SLA theory were closely tied, but that the relationship between them has grown so strained over the years that they are often two separate entities. This seems like a tragedy to me, as the purpose of Second Language Acquisition theory should be improvements in learning in the language classroom. I decided then and there to relate the pedagogy presented in this project to current trends in Second Language Acquisition research, both in an

effort to bridge that gap, and to show the strong background of the pedagogy used in this project.

Chapter II - Literature Review

The literature in Second Language Acquisition, and in language teaching pedagogy, has a long and varied history in regard to the teaching of grammar, reading, and culture. These three elements of language teaching and learning have been part of curriculum, at different times throughout history, and in different ways. In one form or another, they have all been taught with authentic texts, as well. In addition to that, modern research points to a strong desire in students to use authentic texts, and to the fact that there is very little reason not to use them (Bacon & Finneman, 1990, Young, 1999).

The teaching of grammar was imbued in teaching with authentic texts as soon as there were texts to be authentic. The principle of inductivity in language teaching was recognized by 500 B.C. by the Greek (Kelly, 1969). By far, the longest running use of literature to teach grammar is the Grammar Translation Method, still popular in some areas today, was once the most common method of language learning, having been used under various names, including the Classical Method throughout history, and as Grammar Translation from the late nineteenth century

(Brown, 2007b), which focused mainly on rote learning of grammar rules, with focus on reading and writing, with little to no work on listening and speaking.

Grammar has long been excluded from the five commonly accepted skills of language learning (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) due to the onset of Communicative Language Teaching, but current assertions argue strongly for the presence of grammar in the language classroom (Brown 2007a; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Nunan, 2005), whether integrated into other courses or taught on it's own. Some even argue for Grammar to be included as the fifth skill (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Teaching culture has a long history as well, although generally it wasn't taught explicitly, historically. During the Renaissance, culture was taught in the context of "teaching foreign-language learners to act like gentlemen," so that they might better participate in foreign societies (Kelly, 1969). Cultural awareness in language teaching did not receive much attention as a focus until the twentieth century, especially in dealing with foreigners in and after World War II.

The consideration of teaching culture has become a staple of much language learning research. Language and Culture have long been accepted by language teachers and second language acquisition scholars to be closely and intimately connected (Brown, 2007b). This connection between language and culture necessitates the teaching of culture, along with language, to facilitate the learning of both, as it is simply not possible to learn one without the other. Most Intensive

English Programs, however, do not include a culture class; rather, teachers must integrate culture into other language classes, as is often the case with grammar.

Reading, however, has been considered one of the major skills of second language learning much longer. Matters of necessity originated teaching reading with the use of authentic texts, mostly for the teaching of Latin or Greek for religious or historical reasons, and mostly for the purpose of translation (Kelly, 1969). The simplification of texts, as well, is nothing new, “going back to the golden age of Greece, and continuing through Roman times until the end of the Middle Ages,” (Kelly, 1969). Throughout much of history, continuing to the present, Latin has been taught with and for the use and understanding of the Christian bible. In the era of Communicative Language Teaching, it still finds itself one of the primary four skills.

The use of authentic texts is nothing new, although there are a great many texts available now, specifically for language learners. However, there is a great deal of argument for authentic texts among second language acquisition and language teaching researchers, most of whom argue for authenticity in language use, particularly as a motivator for students (Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Kuo, 1993; Little et al., 1994; Tomlinson, 2003). Many of these researchers have found that engagement with authentic texts is necessary to develop communicative and strategic competence in language use, as well.

Bacon and Finneman's (1990) work on the use of authentic texts is especially helpful in examining one reason why they are beneficial in the language classroom. They found that learners generally prefer authentic reading materials that they can relate to current events and themselves. They stressed the importance of authentic input as a motivating factor for students, a way to lower their affective filter, and help them to interact in the language classroom. Bacon and Finneman strongly suggest that input from authentic texts must be integrated into language instruction as a central element as early as possible.

One strategy with authentic texts, familiar to most language teachers is simplification. These simplified texts, however, have not been shown to be any more effective than unsimplified texts. Young (1999) found that learners using simplified and unsimplified (authentic) texts had no significant differences in their learning. The only thing she found is that learners using more authentic texts often had issues dealing with vocabulary, as the language was not simplified. This had little to no effect on the students' post-test scores, however.

From these studies, it can be seen quite simply that teaching with authentic texts is an advantageous strategy, although by no means the only strategy, for teachers in the language classroom. To put it plainly, if students prefer authentic texts, and are more intrinsically motivated by them (Bacon & Finneman, 1990), and since students do just as well with those authentic texts as they do with inauthentic or simplified texts (Young, 1999), there is no excuse for using those inauthentic

texts for language learning. This begs the question of how to use those authentic texts, which I intend to show through the rest of this guide.

Chapter III - Modern Approaches

In an attempt to explain how to teach reading, culture, and grammar with the use of authentic texts, it is necessary to examine current approaches to teaching these topics in general. Most modern approaches that are widely distributed have their roots in either second language acquisition theory or pedagogy. Approaches that deal with SLA theory are the ones that discuss more specifically how people learn language as opposed to approaches that deal more closely with pedagogy, which discuss specific methods that can be used in teaching language. Separately, both these approaches can be incredibly helpful for teachers, in many different ways, but together their effect is much stronger. Both of these approaches to language and language teaching are valuable and useful in understanding how to teach language. If one is going to teach language, one needs to know both how that language is acquired, and how to teach that language, or facilitate that acquisition. A crucial element to the development of successful teaching techniques is the

unification of theory and pedagogy, something that has become a trend only recently (Crookes, 2009; Ellis, 2006).

Grammar

From a theoretical perspective, the current beliefs on grammar are that it should be seen as a dynamic process, in line with Complexity Theory perspectives (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). This approach shows grammar as a dynamic system, changing and evolving over time, composed of a variety of smaller systems (i.e. syntax, morphology, etc.). This approach condemns the idea that long-term language change should be seen as deterioration, instead proposing that language is dynamic over time. This view can be seen in the idea that users of any language need to constantly scan their environment to interpret what they experience, in order to respond appropriately. In essence, this view of grammar shows it as a dynamic skill, to be used in a real environment, instead of merely being a set of abstract rules by which one must abide at all time.

Pedagogically speaking, grammar can be approached somewhat differently, and are often approached very differently, even now. Many teachers believe that grammar should not be taught at all, or that it should only be taught implicitly. The currently accepted belief, among most scholars and researchers, is that it needs to be taught explicitly, at least to some extent (Thornbury, 2005). This approach to teaching grammar separates it into three elements, which can be examined together,

or separately. Those elements are Morphology, Syntax, and Discourse, which can be seen as the smaller systems present in the current theoretical approach to grammar and grammar knowledge.

Culture

Culture, and the teaching of culture, can be viewed from a theoretical perspective in a variety of ways. A common recent theoretical approach to understand what culture is consists of a five dimensional model consisting of products, practices, persons, perspectives, and communities, which can be used together to quantify the idea of how to consider and define culture, which has been shown to have multiple aspects (Moran, 2001). A notable examination of how to assess knowledge of culture is the Framework of Cultural Experience (Moran, 2001), which includes the ideas of Knowing About, Knowing How, Knowing Why, and Knowing Oneself. This theoretical model for examining the knowledge of culture in an individual addresses the ways in which we can understand how one learns culture.

From a pedagogical perspective, culture can be viewed with a three dimensional model that consists of products, ideas, and behaviors (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993). This three dimensional model shows the elements of culture to be taught in the language classroom. This model is intended to help develop qualities such as the awareness of culturally induced behaviors and understanding

cultural standpoints, as two examples. From a pedagogical standpoint, culture can be presented as something quantifiable that affects everything from students' culture, to teachers' culture, to the culture being learned by students. This approach includes topics such as everyday life, cultural behaviors, communicational patterns, and values and attitudes.

Reading

Theoretical perspectives on how students acquire reading abilities and how reading takes place in a second language environment differ somewhat but one of the most preeminent theoretical approaches is the ACTIVE framework (Anderson, 1994, 1999), which is somewhat pedagogically motivated. This framework consists of a series of interactive activities that include both bottom-up and top-down models of reading. Research points to readers using both strategies in any reading activity. The ACTIVE framework stands for activation of prior knowledge, cultivation of vocabulary, teaching for comprehension, increasing the rate of reading, verification of reading strategies, and the evaluation of progress.

From a more directly pedagogical perspective, the current trends are development of reading skills and vocabulary cultivation, which both appear in the ACTIVE framework. Dealing with authentic texts is also one of the foremost concerns in pedagogical approaches to teaching reading (Duff & Maley, 2007). This pedagogical approach views authentic texts as a vehicle for other elements of

language as well, and includes a strong focus on language. Another important issue in this pedagogical approach to teaching reading is extensive and intensive reading, which denote the differences between reading for information over a long period of time, and reading a shorter text, over a shorter period of time, with a great deal more depth and analysis.

Summary

Theory and Pedagogy are present in all aspects of language teaching texts and research, to be certain. In some areas, like grammar and reading, these approaches can have ties between them, and in others, such as culture, they can be intricately tied, as with the three and five dimensional models of culture. These approaches, however, are often presented somewhat separately, with differing analyses and implications in the language classroom. Current arguments indicate the need for the unification of theory and pedagogy, however, in the language classroom to facilitate the best possible learning environment for students. In the following chapters of this project, I intend to provide examples of that unification, with the usage of authentic texts.

Chapter IV - Teaching Grammar with Authentic Texts

The purpose of this chapter is to overview and examine the use of authentic texts in grammar focused language teaching using the principles and approaches discussed in the previous chapter as a guideline for grammar teaching. In doing so, I will provide my analysis and assimilation of theory and pedagogy in relation to grammar teaching and learning. Following that, I will provide rules and guidelines in teaching grammar using authentic texts, based on those analyses.

Language is increasingly being viewed as dynamic and changing (Larsen-Freeman, 2003), which defeats the traditional idea of grammar as a strict set of rules, to be followed at all time. Grammar teaching must then also be dynamic and changing with time. This idea pervades all of language teaching, as shown by the change in teaching methods through history as we learn more about language, and the nature of Second Language Acquisition, or SLA. This idea is applicable, as well, with the use of authentic texts in language teaching.

Approaches

This dynamic application of grammar has been termed Grammmaring (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). This term leads to the view of grammar as a skill, instead of just a set of rules. The goal of teaching grammar, then, becomes the goal of teaching any other skill, the successful and fluent application of that skill in the various settings in which it is necessary. Grammar, then, is rational, meaning that grammar is a logical system. The goal of grammar teaching, therefore, would be the successful application of that system. That is to say, the goal is for students to be able to use grammar in the real world, in whatever context for which they need to use the target language. One way, but by no means the only way, that language teachers can accomplish that goal is through the use of authentic texts. Under this dynamic systems approach to grammar, the prototypical units form three dimensions: Form, Meaning, and Use. Form, here, can be described as the actual grammatical structure, Meaning as the content provided by the grammar, and Use as the function of the grammar.

Prototypical Units of the Three Dimensions

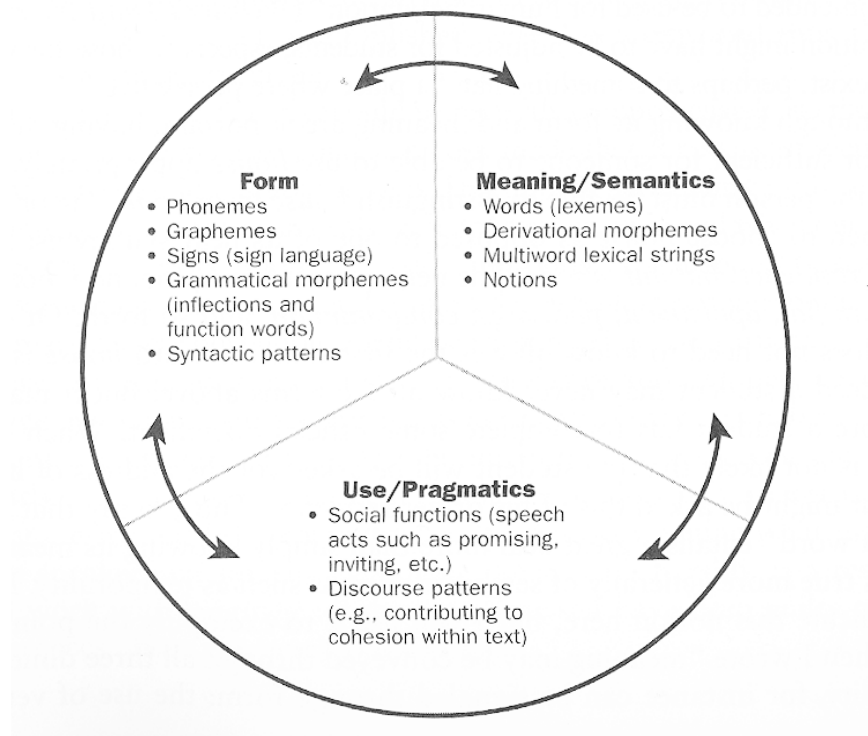


Figure 1: Larsen-Freeman's (2003) Form/Meaning/Use Chart

Examining Grammar

Grammar is often examined in a system that separates it into a different three distinct parts (Thornbury, 2005), which are described as Word Grammar, Sentence Grammar, and Text Grammar. This view quantifies, pedagogically, how grammar can be taught in that it shows separate ways of looking at grammar that are helpful for students. The goal of using this approach is to help in explaining the functioning of language to students.

Word Grammar

Word Grammar is basically just Morphology. If a student can examine and understand how different pieces of a word fit together, from prefixes and suffixes, to grammatical tense, to various roots and stems from which words are derived, they are both better able to change words between parts of speech themselves, and better able to interpret the meaning of unknown words.

Sentence Grammar

Sentence Grammar, then, is Syntax, the rules by which words are organized into sentences. As a language learner, examining the ways in which sentences can be put together: the various structures one can use, what they mean, and why they are used in certain ways, can be incredibly helpful with the process of learning how to put those sentences together themselves.

Text Grammar

The highest level, termed Text Grammar, is a form of Discourse Analysis, which is to say that learners need to be able to understand why certain grammatical forms are used, instead of others, and how grammar helps to create the context of a text, and influences how a text means what it means. This understanding fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the functioning of language, which leads into the ability to function in the dynamic system that is grammar, by one's self.

Uniting Theory and Pedagogy

To bring together these two insights into the field of Grammar teaching, it is important to understand they are not at all mutually exclusive. The idea of grammar as a dynamic skill (Larsen-Freeman, 2003) is in line with the more recent exploration into Complexity Theory as a theory of Second Language Acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). The aforementioned three-sided view of grammar (Thornbury, 2005) effectively describes the skills and methods necessary for putting that skill into action, the components of grammar from a pedagogical perspective, as opposed the more theoretical dynamic-system perspective. In unison, these two ideas provide a well-rounded explanation of how grammar can be taught in the language classroom and acquired by learners.

Why Authentic Texts Can Be Effective

Traditionally the rules of grammar have been taught prescriptively to students, however with the modern view of grammar, as a more dynamic system, these prescriptive rules can no longer be given carte blanche in their application in grammar teaching. If we don't teach grammar as a dynamic system, learners won't learn it as a dynamic system, and if learners don't learn grammar as a dynamic system, they can't use it as a dynamic system.

It is true that competence and performance are separate (Brown, 2007b), however they can work in concert. Understanding the system is a part of being able

to use it. The rules are part of the system, but grammatical rules are not prescribed, but observed. Authentic texts are solid, complete discourse, examinable by students and teachers. If we can help students examine grammar in action, and work out the system, we can facilitate their use of that very system to their own advantage. This doesn't sound easy, and it's not easy, but it is the job of a good teacher to help facilitate that difficult acquisition of the system of grammar. To really own the system, to be able to function within its boundaries, requires a great deal of work on the part of both students and teachers.

Method in Practice

Teachers need to be able to help students examine the way a text works, what the grammar is, and how the grammar affects the meaning of a text. This is the skill of Grammmaring that Larsen-Freeman presents. When a text is approached with the intent to teach grammar, there are two very important things to keep in mind.

- Clear Content & Context – Students must be able to understand the context and content of the text. If students don't know what the text means, they can't decipher how it means that.
 - When looking at content, make sure that the texts you use are appropriate for the level of your students. Low-level students will have much more trouble with something like the New York Times, while higher-level students might not have a problem with it.

- When examining context, for grammar teaching with authentic texts, students need to understand (via explanation in the text or from the teacher, where the text is coming from. If they are using an article from a satirical news source like the Onion, for example, or a serious article with a more liberal or conservative bias, even, students need to understand that, and how that affects the text.
- Contrast Different Texts – Students need to understand different kinds of language, and different ways that the grammatical system can function, so show them as many ways as you can, within reason.
 - One example of this could be the grammatical differences between an article from a college/local newspaper and a nationally or internationally recognized newspaper. The way the authors use grammar to communicate their article is different in terms of both formality and complexity, and these are important things for students to understand.
 - Another example could be the differences between the transcript of a political speech, and a political essay or blog, or even between the written transcript of a speech, and the speech itself. An essay or blog might have a different level of formality, or use different grammatical patterns, just as the difference between the transcript and the speech itself can highlight the differences between grammar in a written and spoken context.

When examining an actual text, teachers need to be able to examine the features that comprise Word, Sentence, and Text Grammar (Thornbury, 2006). Provided below are those three dimensions of grammar, and guidelines for how to incorporate them into authentic text usage in grammar teaching environments.

Word Level Grammar – For morphology, it is necessary to examine the different words in the text you have chosen by doing things such as looking at affixes, roots, and the various meanings that can be found at the word level. This will help with grammatical knowledge, as well as providing students with a valuable resource for interpreting the meaning of words they don't already know by activating prior knowledge. This involves as well, transformation between the various parts of speech.

- An example of Word Level Grammar could be the use of words students might be unfamiliar with, for a word like “discontinue,” for example, a teacher could illustrate the use of “dis” as negating the verb “continue.”
- Another example is looking at various ways that words can be transformed between different parts of speech in a text with suffixes like “ment,” or “tion.”

Sentence Level Grammar – In examining syntax from the perspective of authentic texts, it is important to examine how sentences are put together, look at the function words and how those work, in concert, to impart the information that

the sentence needs to impart to be understood. This involves parts of speech, from nouns and verbs to prepositions and conjunctions. It is important to keep in mind that all of the parts of speech are important to impart to students, as they all have a place in sentences, and construct the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

- An example of Sentence Level Grammar in the classroom is taking a topic non-native speakers of English often have trouble with, like prepositions. Students would then examine what prepositions are used in what context, and how they function in each sentence.
- Alternatively, gerunds or infinitives, and the ways that sentences need to use grammar around them to fit in with the system could be examined.

Text Grammar – This is actually a form of Discourse Analysis, albeit simplified and with attention paid specifically to grammar. Teaching this entails looking at how and why grammar patterns are used. One example is the analysis of why passive voice was chosen for a specific sentence, or the purpose of using more formal and complex, or simple and informal grammar, in various contexts.

- Examples here are somewhat more contextual. A possibility is examining transcripts of political speeches to see how passive voice is used to hedge around meanings and ideas that the speaker does not want to refer to directly.

- Alternatively, looking at the use of simple past tense in short stories, and why it's so common is another strong example.

Authentic Texts as Supplement

There are a great deal of different grammatical features and phenomena that we can facilitate the examination of for students. Teaching grammar, and how to use it dynamically, need more than just authentic texts. Functioning in the dynamic system that is grammar includes, but is certainly not limited to examination, analysis, and contrasting of various examples of grammar usage. This examination, analysis, and contrast, however, is a step on the way to that functioning that can be accomplished more easily with authentic texts than with texts prepared for language learners, which may not have language that can be found in real-life situations. When possible, there is no reason but laziness to use any language but authentic language as examples to investigate.

That is not to say, however, that authentic texts are the only thing that a teacher should rely on, when teaching grammar. There is another very important insight to share, however, which is the idea of Connectionism, or Order of Acquisition (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Dulay et al, 1982), which maps networks in the brain and can help to explain the order of acquisition that learners follow when acquiring grammar. As a general rule, language classes have a prescribed order of features or acquisition that is to be followed. It is usually recommended that

teachers follow this order of acquisition in textbooks or curricula that have been thoroughly researched.

Sample Grammar Lesson

I have presented a good deal of ideas and concepts here, that can be very helpful in the language classroom, however, context is important not just for students but for teachers as well. It is in that spirit that I present, here, a lesson I used in one of my own classes, using an authentic text to teach grammar. Basically, I have here my proposal put into practice. I will describe each step and activity used in the lesson in detail, and provide an explanation for its use as well.

Class: Advanced Grammar Class at a Midwestern University IEP

Students: Eleven students, from China, Korea, Bangladesh, and Mexico

Goals: To develop skills in assessing the formality of grammar, and to understand the discourse uses of passive voice

The Lesson: This was structured as two fifty-minute-long lessons using a combination of authentic video and text. The previous week, President Obama had given his first State of the Union address to Congress, and the New York Times posted a video of the speech online that had a transcript that would play along with the video.

Day 1 –

10 Minutes – The class began with a short discussion of formal and informal language, where students gave examples of the differences they knew between the two. They brought up examples like the complexity of grammar and use of contractions, and with a little pushing, things like pronoun use and speech reductions.

- The purpose of this was twofold. Firstly, it functioned as an informal pretest, and gave me an understanding of what students knew already about levels of formality in language, which was helpful in determining the level of detail to provide for the students in the subsequent activity. Secondly, It allowed the students to interact, which activates their prior knowledge of the topic, as well as being beneficial all on it's own, as per Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) which has been shown to be effective even between non-native speakers (Smith, 2004).

35 Minutes – The students were given a written transcription of the address, before starting to watch the video along with the transcript on-screen. After each section, the video was paused, in order that the language might be discussed. The students found examples of informality (e.g. referring to the first lady by name, contractions, etc.) and formality (e.g. complex grammar, lack of contractions, etc) in the various sections of the speech.

- The purpose for this activity was to provide students with ample chance to actually examine formality and informality in a guided setting. The class,

collaborating together did almost all of the identification of these patterns, provided suggestions, and finally provided agreement or disagreement on each point. Only once class agreement was reached did the teacher provide his own judgment on the language. This was necessary to provide students with examples and methods for finding levels of formality in authentic language, themselves. This activity connects sentence level grammar and text level grammar in that students are examining the way sentences are put together, and how that influences the meaning (in this case the formality) of the text.

5 Minutes – The students are given the homework assignment to watch the whole first half of the speech on their own, and bring five examples each of formal and informal language from the speech to class the next day, where they will present them to the class, to the agreement or disagreement of the rest of the class.

- This homework provided students with a chance to practice, on their own, the skills that were developed and practiced during the day in class, cementing their ability to understand how language is formal or informal.

Day 2 –

15 Minutes – Students presented their examples of informal and formal language, and for each, the class agreed or disagreed with the example in question, giving examples and explanations.

- This presentation gave students a chance to show the work they had done to the other students in the class. This serves several purposes. First, it gives the students a chance to compare their own work with their classmates, which lets students understand how the level of their work compares with other students. Secondly, it gives students a chance to assess each others' work, which is helpful for students as per Swain's Output Hypothesis (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Finally, it encourages debate and interaction in the classroom.

30 Minutes – First, the teacher explained that the class was going to be paying more explicit attention to various grammar features that President Obama is using in his speech, to express himself. The class began to watch the second half of the address, pausing after uses of passive voice, to discuss the purpose of that particular usage. The teacher provided more insight at the beginning, but with encouragement, the students provided their own analyses for most uses of passive voice.

- This activity mirrors the long activity from Day 1 in that it is providing the students with guided practice, although here it is with the analysis of passive voice, instead of formality in language use. This provides the students with interaction, as well, which has been shown to affect students positively.

5 Minutes – The class discussed the importance of grammar, passive voice specifically, and how these things can be used to shape meaning of language in various ways.

- This simple discussion served to provide an interactionally based sense of closure to the lesson, and functioned, as well, as a simple post-test, to show that the students understood the material covered in the lesson.

Summary

To summarize, grammar is both a dynamic process, and a system whose teaching can be separated in to three elements: Word Grammar, Sentence Grammar, and Text Grammar. These things, as well as the content, context, and the contrast apparent between different texts are all important in teaching grammar with authentic texts, whether it be in a grammar-specific class, or in an integrated-skills class that includes grammar. This is not to say that grammar should be taught only with authentic texts, however. They can be used, often most effectively, as a supplement to an actual grammar textbook, or at least along with a prescribed order of grammar features.

Chapter V - Teaching Culture with Authentic Texts

Language and culture, are, as have been shown innumerable times, strongly interconnected (Brown, 2007). Students will not acquire one, without some measure of the other. In addition, for students whose goal it is to function as a member of society in the target culture, this cultural learning is a necessity. Like the other topics in this guide, it can be gained through authentic texts, perhaps, even more easily than through textbook learning. This is because authentic texts are designed by native speakers, with native speakers in mind as an audience, which makes the cultural artifacts more natural than those that can be found in textbooks.

The problem, however, lies in how to approach teaching culture. Every expert seems to have a different standpoint as to what culture is, and how it would best be taught (Moran, 2001, Sercu, 2005, Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). In this chapter, I will provide a contextualization of these approaches, and detail the methods and resources available for teachers to use in order to teach Culture explicitly, with the use of authentic texts.

Approaches

Culture, can be defined in a more theoretical approach as multifaceted (Moran, 2001), with numerous definitions. The problem with this is that teaching something relies on understanding it, and it is more difficult to understand something with numerous definitions. The varied definitions and explanations in this approach can be helpful in understanding what culture is, and how to assess the understanding of culture. On one hand, culture can be seen as a collage of various elements (Moran, 2001) including art, literature, customs, history, food, music, politeness, daily life, and a plethora of other things. Bringing these things together was first popularized in a three dimensional approach originally proposed by Nemetz-Robinson (1988) but later developed more extensively by Tomalin & Stempleski (1993).

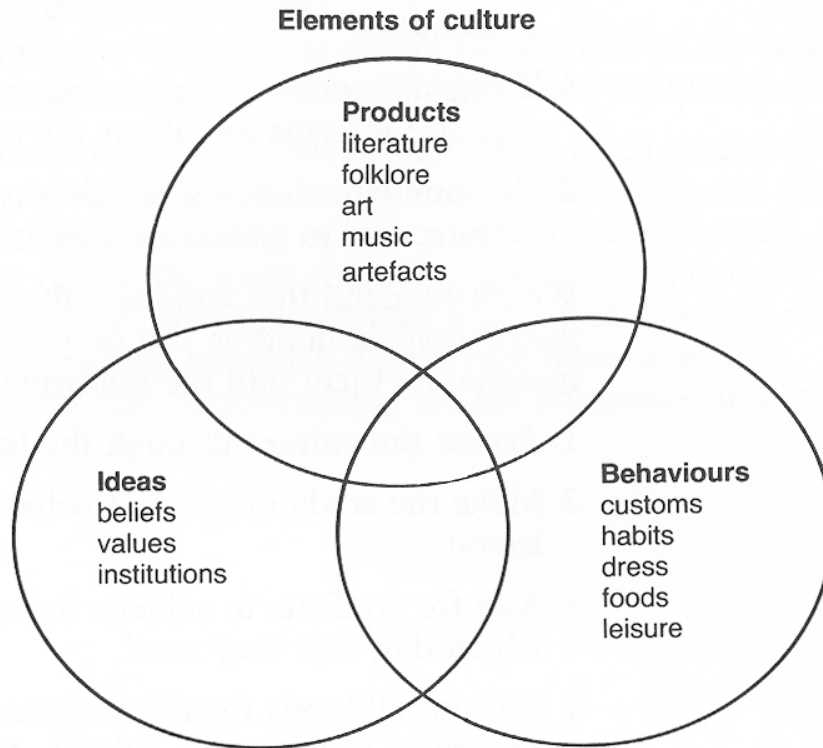


Figure 2: Tomalin & Stempleski's (1993) Culture Model

This three-dimensional approach highlights products, ideas, and behaviors as the most salient. The notion of categorizing these highly varying elements of culture into specific categories is incredibly helpful in the attempt to organize the disparate elements that make up the collage of culture. This model has since been further developed into a five-dimensional approach, changing ideas to perspectives, behaviors to practices, and adding persons and communities (Moran, 2001). This development further adds the idea of explicit and tacit elements of culture, with perspectives being the tacit element, connected closely with products and practices. This model provides a more thorough examination of the major areas of culture, and how they interact with each other.

The Iceberg of Culture

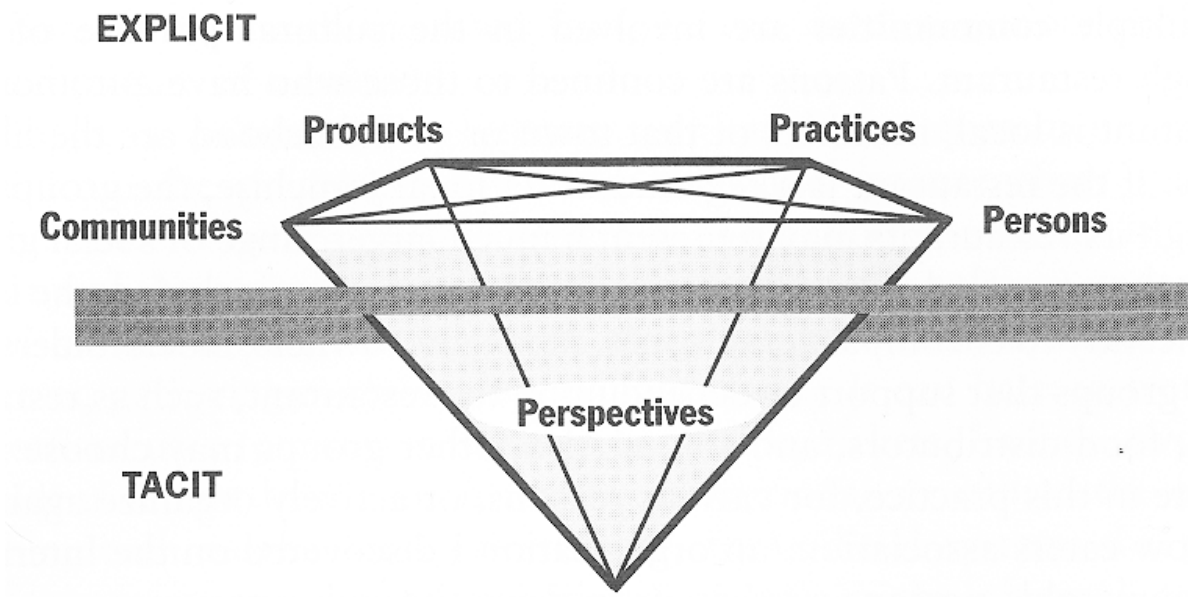


Figure 3: Moran's (2001) 5 Dimensional Model of Culture

Uniting Theory and Pedagogy

The Cultural Knowings Framework (Moran, 2001) provides a sound example for understanding how cultural knowledge can be assessed, from a more realistic, if still somewhat subjective, point of view. The Cultural Knowings Framework presents knowledge about culture in four interactions. This framework examines the knowledge of culture, through aspects of the five dimensional model presented above. This framework is intended for assessing the cultural knowledge that students gain, and to organizing and planning how to teach culture to students.

Knowing Oneself: The Organizing Dimension

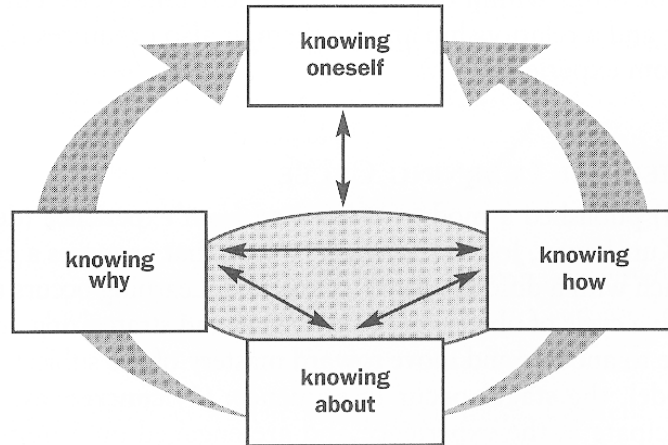


Figure 4: Moran's (2001) Framework of Cultural Knowing

- Knowing About – knowing the facts and data
- Knowing How – acquiring cultural behaviors and skills
- Knowing Why – understanding cultural perspectives
- Knowing Oneself – being aware of self and relation to cultures

This Framework of Cultural Knowings matches with the view of Culture as a multifaceted concept. Both of them, in fact, are necessary for a successful consideration of Culture in language teaching. Understanding a culture is not just knowing information about the people: food, import and exports, history. And it is not just knowing what people do, or why. Understanding culture is essentially understanding why people are the way they are, which is rife with complexities. This Framework of Cultural Knowings, in effect, builds on the three and five dimensional theoretical models of culture, and organizes them in a way that can assist with their teaching.

Why Authentic Texts Can Be Effective

Authentic texts can be a valuable asset in the teaching of Culture to language learners, in a variety of contexts, in relation to both the five dimensional model of culture, and the Framework of Cultural Knowings. Authentic texts provide concrete examples of each of the five dimensions of Culture.

- Communities – Anything from fiction to local news stories can depict communities, and allow for the analyzation of what communities consist of, and how they function in the target culture.
- Persons – Authentic texts, by their very nature deal with people, from the author, to characters in fiction or non-fiction stories, to the intended audience. These are all people.
- Products – These, as well, are an integral part of what makes texts authentic. Stories will, as a matter of course, include the products that are commonly created and used by people in the target culture, and these authentic texts, are, in and of themselves, products of the target culture.
- Practices – Authentic texts, from news articles to stories, will include practices in the target culture; they are composed of them.
- Perspectives – The perspectives of people in the target culture will be imbued, though often more deeply, though sometimes on a more surface level, in any writing produced by and for them.

This overview of the five dimensions of culture shows clearly that authentic texts are, indeed, closely tied with culture in that they are examples of culture in action. News stories report on the actions, products and perspectives of people in the target culture. Fiction and poetry show strong views of people, and their perspectives. All these things can provide information about real-life communities in the target culture. Frankly, there is no method to separate culture from the authentic text-based materials in which it can appear. Here, the Language-Culture Connection is, perhaps, more apparent than in other texts.

Method in Practice

Since culture is undoubtedly somewhat vague, foggy, and multifaceted, it can be difficult to understand exactly what it is that needs to be taught, and how it should be done most thoroughly. For teachers, it is important, not only to teach students culture, but to teach them culture as completely and as extensively as necessary, in order to ensure their successful integration into, or at least communication within the boundaries of the target culture. There are several areas of cultural teaching that comprise a strong overview of the work and skills needed by students to function in a cultural environment (adapted from Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). I have put those areas together into five sections provided below:

1. Recognizing Cultural Images and Symbols

2. Patterns of Everyday Life
3. Patterns of Communication
4. Values and Attitudes
5. Cultural Experiences

Recognizing Cultural Images and Symbols

At the most basic level of cultural knowledge, it is important to understand the great symbols and images of any culture, from a nation's flag, to political leaders or entertainment icons to famous architecture or landscapes. It is vital that students can understand and identify those images that come to the mind of those immersed in the culture when they think about that culture. This may seem like mostly surface aspects of culture, and it is, but those are important too.

Patterns of Everyday Life

This section is relatively self-explanatory, and it seems quite easy, however it can be surprisingly complex. It is important for students to understand the everyday life of the target culture. You can learn a lot about people from what they do on a regular basis. This would include things like typical jobs, the foods people eat, holidays, that sort of thing. Think about a typical day in the life of an average person in the target culture. What does that person do; how do they go about their day. Now, examine that in terms of whether the day is a weekday or during the weekend, by season, and by that person's age. People do a lot of things, normally, and it's important to understand not just what they are, but why people do them.

Patterns of Communication

People communicate in different ways, for different reasons, in any culture. Some of this is verbal, and some of it is non-verbal. Younger people in some countries need to speak with a certain amount of respect for their elders; people stand in certain positions, at certain distances when they communicate. For your students to function in a cultural environment, they need to understand how that cultural environment works, and a large part of that is understanding the mechanics of communication; how you say things is as important as what you say. Students need to learn things like backchanneling, the correct distance or amount of eye contact necessary depending on who they are speaking with, how to deal with statements that are really questions, and how to know when they break those sorts of rules or hear those statements.

Value and Attitudes

To understand a culture, and its people, it is essential to understand the values, beliefs, and attitudes that those people hold dear. This can include some very controversial issues in the target culture such as religious or political issues, less controversial ones, such as attitudes toward other countries or the basic value system that people hold to. Here, as well, it is as important to know what people think as it is to know why. If an entire nation of people believes something or acts a

certain way, in order understanding them, it is crucial to know what they believe and to understand why they believe it.

Cultural Experiences

As important as it is for students to understand the How's and Why's of the target culture, it is just as important for students to experience that culture, firsthand. Sharing those experiences, and hearing the experiences of classmates is another important aspect of learning a culture. Students have a lot to share that can be beneficial, not just for other students, but for themselves as well. By sharing those cultural experiences, they can discuss the meaning, purpose, and reasons for the experience they had, and together, they can compare their experiences with those of their own culture. Much of understanding a new culture can come from contrasting it with the culture one already knows. Teachers have a great deal of information as well. Even if those teachers are not a native of the country whose culture that they are teaching, they certainly have valuable experiences and insights that they can share with students.

Authentic Texts as Supplement

So, how is this all usable with authentic texts? Given that authentic texts are designed by native speakers, for native speakers, they are filled with cultural context that can be used for your language and culture-teaching needs (Duff & Maley, 2007). It is necessary to find the culture in these texts, and then pull it out

and examine it. If the activity is reading a short story about somebody's life, the teacher must find the details about everyday life and talk about them. If the class is reading an editorial article in a magazine or newspaper about important political or religious issues, it provides perfect examples of native speakers' opinions to examine and pick out the values and attitudes of those people. Patterns of communication can be seen in short stories. The key lies in finding something that highlights a specific area of the cultural aspect that is being taught, so that students have something on which to base their ideas and assumptions.

Across Proficiency Levels

While this is much easier with higher-level students, it can be done just as well with students of any proficiency level. If it is troublesome finding an appropriate short story for students of your level, to examine daily life, teachers must find something simpler, like magazine advertisements, or even a restaurant menu. Cultural images and symbols can be found in anything that is culturally based, so there is no reason not to use texts that are appropriate for the proficiency level of students. Exploring things like cultural values and attitudes, or patterns of communication, is best reserved for intermediate or advanced students, but in everyday life and cultural images and symbols, there is more than enough cultural information to last until students have acquired the target language to the level necessary to perform a more thorough examination.

Sample Culture Lesson

These ideas, from the Five Dimensional Model of Culture and the Framework of Cultural Knowings, to the Areas of Cultural Teaching may still seem somewhat disparate. To alleviate that disparity, I will present a lesson from my own teaching, where I used authentic texts to relate cultural information.

Class: Advanced Reading Class at a Midwestern University IEP

Students: Eight students, all from China

Goals: To develop an understanding of the idea of Equality in American culture, and its historic importance.

The Lesson: This was structured as one fifty minute long lesson, and one thirty minute long lesson, comparing two texts of very different types: Kurt Vonnegut's short story, "Harrison Bergeron," and the beginning of The Declaration of Independence. These two texts were chosen for their strong contrasting focus on independence and for their contrasting grammatical style.

Day 1:

Students had read the story, "Harrison Bergeron" as homework before arriving

10 Minutes – Students had read the short story, "Harrison Bergeron" as homework, and they began the class with a short discussion of the events in the story,

describing both what happened and the way they felt about the progression of the story, and its characters.

- The purpose of this activity was both to elicit interaction between the students, and to refresh them on the events of the story, if it had been more than a day since their reading of it.

15 Minutes – Students engaged in a discussion of the cultural aspects that framed the story. The discussion began with students contrasting Chinese ideas of equality with those presented in the text. From there, two discussion questions were addressed: “Do you think that all people are equal?” and, “Do you think that equality can be enforced?” The question that the discussion ended on was, “What is Vonnegut trying to tell readers with this story?”

- This discussion was meant to engage the students in active analysis of the story, and the ideas that the story presents. The students were interacting (Long, 1996) to negotiate for the deeper cultural meaning in the story, the perspectives, of the five dimensional model, and they were analyzing the story itself, as a product of a specific culture.

10 Minutes – Students participated in an activity where they designed fictional handicaps for a partner in the class. (In the story, all those with “unfair advantages” like higher intelligence, beauty, or strength were handicapped to be equal to others) Five minutes was provided for the handicap design, and another five for the presentation of handicaps to the class.

- This activity was designed to affectively engage students with the radical variation on the cultural concept of equality that was being presented in the task, and to give them a chance to create their own experience with the culture being examined in the classroom.

10 Minutes – Students examined the grammar of “Harrison Bergeron.” The students found that the story was written in a very simple style, which they believed was to emphasize the idea of equality, which was the one overriding principle of the story. They decided that the use of past tense to tell the story was intended to show it as something unchangeable, that had already happened, in order to strengthen the feeling of inevitability that the story provided.

- This activity was, obviously, more grammar-based than culturally based. Still, it is examining a cultural product, and how the meaning in that cultural product was constructed.

5 Minutes – Students were given an assignment to write a short, two paragraph long story about the idea of equality in their own culture, using tense different from that used by Vonnegut in “Harrison Bergeron,” and to write a short explanation of how that affected the story.

Day 2:

5 Minutes – Students turned in their stories, and briefly discussed the ramifications of writing a story in present tense, and the confusion it created for them, which led to a general agreement that it makes sense for stories to be told in past tense.

- The purpose of this short activity was to provide closure on the homework, and to make sure students understood tense in stories, and how it worked.

15 Minutes – Students were introduced to the importance of the Declaration of Independence in American culture, and as a group, read through the first four sections of the document, negotiating for meaning together when the language was difficult to comprehend.

- This activity exposed students to an alternative viewpoint of equality in one of the most culturally important products in American history. This assisted students in knowing about the history of equality in the United States, and in learning about how equality came to be such an important idea. Reading such a difficult text involved a lot of negotiation for meaning through group interaction (Long, 1996), which is beneficial for language learning.

10 Minutes – The students compared the Declaration of Independence to “Harrison Bergeron,” in terms of the idea of equality, its presentation, and its importance in American culture. They also examined the tense of the document (present) and discussed why a political document such as this would need present tense, while a story would flow more easily with past tense.

- This activity promoted a comparison of cultural experiences and perspectives, as well as contrasting the very different communities of audience for different texts. This was helpful for students in understanding some of the major cultural principles that guide the United States.

Summary

In this chapter I have provided detailed models of what it is that comprises the concept we call culture, as well as a framework for assessing understanding of that culture and areas of teaching it. I have detailed how to teach culture with authentic texts, even across proficiency levels, and I have provided a sample lesson that I used, myself, to teach culture using authentic texts. Although some teachers may not be teaching in a program that has separate classes for culture, it is still vital to understand the value of teaching culture in the language classroom, and the value authentic texts can have in teaching culture.

Chapter VI - Teaching Reading with Authentic Texts

Reading and by extension, reading skills, are natural examples of teaching with authentic texts. Whenever authentic texts are dealt with, teachers must deal with reading by very nature of how a text functions, which is a large part of how reading, and reading skills are taught. In an academic, or social setting, outside of the language classroom, students will be expected to read texts in the second language environment and thus, it is crucial that they understand how to do that effectively, in order to be successful reading in the real world.

In this chapter I will provide a detailed overview and instructions for using authentic materials to teach reading, and reading skills. I will do that through the use of the ACTIVE Framework of reading learning, and through the explanation of Reading Skills, coupled with an argument for their use, specifically with authentic texts, a methodology for using authentic texts for these purposes, and a detailed example of authentic texts in use to promote these ideas from my own teaching. This should provide the relevant information for using these techniques with authentic texts one's self, in the language classroom.

Approaches

The theoretical ACTIVE framework, (Anderson, 1994, 1999), is one of the more pervading models of teaching reading. The framework functions as a way to portray reading as an active process instead of viewing it as a passive skill. It is an attempt to quantify the strategies that should be considered when teaching a reading class for language learners, in both a theoretical way, and from a somewhat pedagogical perspective. This framework is intended, as well, to be something taught interactively, not something to be taught in sequence.

A – Activate Prior Knowledge

C – Cultivate Vocabulary

T – Teach for Comprehension

I – Increase Reading Rate

V – Verify Reading Strategies

E – Evaluate Progress

It is certainly helpful to examine the various areas of this framework individually to assess how these areas can be best accomplished in the language classroom, and apart from that, it is necessary to understand their relationship to language learning, and to reading, in particular.

Activate Prior Knowledge

The activation of prior knowledge is an important strategy for language learning in general, as well as reading ability more specifically. Activating prior knowledge is a common feature in learning in general. When a student can use the information they already have to assess and understand new information, that new information is more thoroughly acquired and understood. For a language learner, this can involve anything from previously acquired aspects of the target language to the learner's own cultural background and interests.

Cultivate Vocabulary

Vocabulary development is one of the important features of reading in a second language environment. Especially with authentic texts, students will run into a great variety of new vocabulary that must be either understood or ignored. It is the language teacher's responsibility to make sure that the new terms that need to be understood are, in fact, understood, and that the new vocabulary that can be ignored is ignored. More will be presented on this later, in the reading skills section of this chapter.

Teach for Comprehension

This, like the activation of prior knowledge, is a strategy that can be used in all language learning environments, not just reading. The idea of Communicative Language Teaching, which is the very essence of modern language teaching philosophy, is that the purpose of language is communication, the ability to

understand materials in the target language, and to be understood in return.

Succinctly put, people need to understand what they read, and teachers, need to facilitate that comprehension in students.

Increase Reading Rate

The idea with increasing reading rates, for students, is to enable them to read more quickly. Whether they intend to study something else using the target language, or just to study the language to use in business or social situations, the rate at which learners read is important. In an academic setting, where they will need to read extensively, it is vitally important that learners be able to get through material at a fast pace, so that they have enough time to read what is needed. In a business or social setting, there are many examples of instances where reading quickly could be necessary, like a meeting agenda, or even something as simple as reading for pleasure, with friends.

Verify Reading Strategies

These reading strategies can be explained in a variety of ways, focusing mainly on the role that readers take in strategic reading, whether that be active or passive (Anderson, 1999). To put it briefly, reading strategies are the skills that people (language learners or otherwise) put to use, consciously, during the reading process for a specific purpose or goal. The strategies, themselves, will be described shortly in the “Reading Skills” section of this chapter. These Reading Skills, however, are essential to the reading ability of language learners. It is the teacher’s

responsibility to make sure that these skills are being attained, and that students are progressing with them. Their discussion, as an unaccompanied element of language teaching and learning will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Evaluate Progress

This area of the framework is relatively self-explanatory. The evaluation of progress is necessary in any type of learning. Language teachers need to be able to analyze the progress and needs of their students in order to meet those needs, and to facilitate progression towards the goals specified by the teacher, the department, and by the students themselves.

Uniting Theory and Pedagogy

The ACTIVE Framework, and these reading skills may seem disparate at first glance, but upon closer inspection, they are intricately tied together. The Activation of Prior Knowledge is key in several reading skills, from vocabulary development, where readers must examine what they already know in order to know what words they do not need to understand or to understand new words and Cultivate their Vocabulary. The goal of reading in general is Comprehension, which is negotiated through the understanding of organizational patterns in texts. Reading Rate is Increased through practices like Scanning and Skimming. The Verification of Reading Strategies and Evaluation of Progress must take place as students progress through the reading skills, and in their reading ability. Briefly, each element of the

ACTIVE Framework relates directly to reading skills, and to students needs.

Teachers can use the ACTIVE Framework to examine the methods they are using to teach reading and reading skills to their students.

Why Authentic Texts Can be Effective

Authentic texts provide teachers and students with the resources necessary to accomplish the learning shown in Reading Skills and in The ACTIVE Framework in a more realistic environment than textbooks, on their own, can provide. They are the texts that students are being trained in order to read. Authentic texts offer language in an incredible variety of registers, and styles with amazingly variable difficulty, as well as being more affectively engaging than many texts that can be found in students' textbooks (Duff & Maley, 2007). Basically, students need to be able to read these texts, after they have finished with their language learning. It only makes sense, then, to practice with them during their language learning.

Method in Practice

One of the most, if not the most important aspect of teaching reading is reading skills. These are the skills and strategies that readers use to understand and get through the texts that they have to read. They are the vital tools that readers can use to negotiate meaning in a text, and to navigate through the language that

composes that text. Here, I will cover the range of important reading skills, and how they function for readers and in the language classroom.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development, as shown in the ACTIVE framework is an important part of reading, and there are two important reading skills that deal with vocabulary and terminology: Learning From Context, and Knowing What Words to Ignore. These are both vital skills for language learners to read both successfully and meaningfully.

Knowing What Words to Ignore is a vital vocabulary skill. Language learners, functioning in the target language, will read a multitude of texts, from academic textbooks or journal articles to novels or newspaper articles, even restaurant menus, or advertisements. When one comes across an unknown word, before trying to determine the meaning of the word, it is first prudent to determine if, in fact, knowledge of the unknown word is necessary at all. It may seem counter-intuitive to encourage students to skip over some words, but realistically, as long as they can understand the text they are reading, it is not really necessary to understand every single word. Unfortunately, the process of Knowing What Words to Ignore is rather subjective to the individual reader. Different students will be able to ignore different words to understand the sentence. The best strategy to introduce this skill to students is to find a text with relatively simple meaning, that

uses some difficult vocabulary, and go through it with your students, asking for main ideas every so often, when students come across words they do not understand.

Learning Vocabulary From Context is the most helpful skill students can use for vocabulary acquisition. Looking up unknown words in a dictionary whenever students come across them takes a great deal of time, interrupts the flow of reading, and, while helpful to a small extent, does not always lead to acquisition of the word in question. It is much more helpful for learners to look at the word and its context, in order to figure out the word's meaning for themselves. Even if the meaning they determine is not perfect, it is internalized much more so than looking it up in a dictionary, and takes much less time once the process has been automatized.

Students can Learn Vocabulary From Context, by looking at the sentence where the unknown word is found, and figuring out the following: what part of speech the word is; what words, if any, are modifying the word; what words, if any, the word is modifying; if there are any recognizable parts (morphemes) in the word. With that knowledge in mind, learners should be able to use deductive reasoning to approximate the meaning of the word in question. This appears as if it would take quite a long time, but once the process has become automatized, learners should be able to accomplish it without much trouble.

Scanning and Skimming

Scanning and Skimming texts are two more very important skills for language learners trying to read in a second language. Learners need to be able to find information in the texts they are reading quickly and accurately. In order to do that, they must understand the skills of Skimming and Scanning, and how to use them to their advantage.

Scanning involves being able to search through information quickly, to find what is relevant to their needs. Scanning is used in a range of situations from going through the Table of Contents or Index of a book or magazine to find the important information, or looking through a textbook chapter to find the section with relevant information, to looking through a restaurant menu or even finding a word in a dictionary. To teach scanning to students, consider using the very same texts that they can use to scan, and giving them timed opportunities to practice. When this skill has become automatized, students will be much better able to search out and find the information they need in any given reading-based circumstance.

Skimming is the ability to go through texts quickly, reading only what is necessary to understand the main idea of what one is reading. Many teachers consider skimming to be a negative skill, in that students may not always pay close attention to the material they are reading, however, just as important as knowing how to skim is knowing when to skim, which must be taught concurrently in order that students do not abuse the skill. There are situations, however, including academic situations,

where skimming is a necessary skill, and it is important that language learners acquire it. It is not always necessary to look at every part of the text to understand what an author is trying to convey. If a student is looking for texts on a particular topic, for example, it can be very helpful to quickly go over the author's main points, in order to find out if the text in question will be useful or not. Students need to be able to go through texts quickly, and they don't always need to go through them thoroughly. To teach Skimming, like Scanning, students need to practice. I have found that timing students with large readings, and seeing how much information they can glean from the text, then going over the text to show what parts contain the important ideas can help students to acquire the ability to Skim.

Knowing Organizational Patterns

Just as important for going through texts quickly, efficiently, and thoroughly enough to understand the content is Knowing Organizational Patterns. This skill consists of knowledge of the various patterns that authors use to organize their texts. If a language learner understands how authors put texts together in English, and they can identify those patterns in texts, and know how those patterns affect the meaning of texts, reading a text becomes a much simpler process. As texts can be widely varied, it is difficult to determine specific organizational patterns, but some examples include: Comparison/Contrast, Cause and Effect, Time Order, and Classification (from Upton, 2007).

Authentic Texts as Supplement

Reading, considered one of the four major skills, is generally taught as a separate course, at least for more advanced students. There is no debate as to whether or not reading should be taught, as is found with culture, and although less often, with grammar. The issue then becomes whether to use authentic texts as a supplement to a textbook or in lieu of that textbook. It is true that either of these approaches can lead to successful language learning, however when textbooks are removed entirely from the equation, the workload on the teacher increases dramatically. With the absence of textbooks, teachers need to design and plan each element that students will be developing for the course. For that reason, I suggest the use of authentic materials, even in the reading classroom, as a supplement to a textbook, or as a vehicle for delivering knowledge presented to the teacher in a pre-defined classroom framework.

Sample Reading Lesson

To show the methodology and guidelines presented in this chapter in action, and to ensure that the theoretical and pedagogical perspectives on reading have been united, I have included here a lesson presented, in my own classroom.

Class: Advanced Reading Class at a U.S. Midwestern University IEP

Students: Eight Students, all from China

Goals: To practice and develop abilities related to skimming texts for important information, and to assist in the ability to determine vocabulary from context.

The Lesson: This was structured as one fifty minute lesson and one thirty minute lesson, using newspaper articles presenting Barack Obama and Sarah Palin in both positive and negative lights in order to increase their understanding of bias in text, while practicing their skimming abilities, and their abilities to determine vocabulary from context quickly.

Day 1: Students were instructed to each bring in a news article, from various newspapers previously assigned on Sarah Palin.

15 Minutes – Students were provided with two articles on Barack Obama, which they were given only five minutes each to read, and five minutes to discuss in small groups in relation to the positive or negative portrayal of Obama that each article presented.

- The purpose of this activity was to introduce students to the idea of bias in the media, while giving them a chance to practice skimming through an article, and determining the difficult vocabulary from context.

10 Minutes – Students discussed, as a class, the two differing portrayals of Barack Obama in the provided articles, offering examples of positive and negative portrayal in each article.

- This activity helped to test the students skimming ability in a controlled environment, and allowed for student interaction.

15 Minutes – Students, in partners, skimmed their partners’ articles on Sarah Palin, having already read their own, and determined, from that, positive and negative portrayals of Palin together, discussing specific examples and preparing for a presentation to be given in class the next day.

- This activity allowed for students to work on skimming abilities, as well as the determining of main ideas and biases in texts in a more student-centered environment with less input from the teacher, in order that students might be able to perform those activities in an unsupervised environment.

Day 2:

20 Minutes – Students presented their articles, in pairs, on Sarah Palin, examining the language used to portray her positively or negatively. Students discussed, together the examples provided in each presentation to determine if they were, in fact, showing the features that the presenters described.

- The purpose of this activity was to allow the students a chance to present their work in an interaction-based activity, and to allow the students as a whole, to see a myriad of examples of the things they might need to skim for in such an article.

10 Minutes – Students, as a class, discussed the various ways in which bias can be seen in newspaper articles, and then came up with a list of important terminology and information to look for in texts to determine bias.

- This final activity gave students a chance to quantify what they had discovered over the course of the lesson. The list of terminology and cues for bias in newspaper language assist with the students' ability to find that information in skimming circumstances.

Summary

The ACTIVE framework of reading, in context with the pedagogical approaches of teaching reading skills and teaching with authentic texts provide a strong basis for the use of authentic texts in the language classroom and the unification of SLA theory and language teaching pedagogy in regard to teaching reading. The ACTIVE framework directly relates to pedagogy, and to the teaching of reading skills. Authentic texts, the medium of choice for much of modern reading teaching, then, are shown to be quite advantageous, both as supplement to language learning texts, and as language learning texts of their own right.

Chapter VII - Authenticity in the Language Learning Classroom

In this chapter I will present the factors that should influence the choices of authentic texts, and provide guidelines for the selection of materials, as well as provide several alternative approaches for the use of authentic texts in the classroom. What to use, in teaching language with authentic texts is an important question, and is really one that is answered by why those texts are being used, and who they are being used for. How those texts are being used, whether by the methods provided previously in this project or by different methods, they can certainly be effective in teaching language.

How to Decide on Authentic Texts

When deciding on which authentic texts to use in the language classroom, there are some important guidelines to keep in mind. Students are all different, but generally something draws them together, whether it's cultural knowledge, if they

come from a single cultural background, or even something as simple as their reason for learning English (i.e. an IEP designed for university preparation).

This leads directly to the three most important factors in selecting authentic texts for language learning, which are the Classroom Context, students' Proficiency Level, and Feature Saliency (Duff & Maley, 2007). From a context-perspective, it is important to examine whether or not the subject matter would be interesting or relevant to students, if they would be offended by anything in it (which does not necessarily exclude it from use), and the amount of prior knowledge they could put to use with it. In terms of proficiency, texts need to have a language level appropriate for students, both linguistically and culturally. In addition, texts need to be the right length for the activities prepared for them, and the class in which they will be examined. From the vantage point of Feature Saliency, texts need to have the features, grammatical, cultural, organizational, or otherwise, that you intend to cover in your lesson. It is up to you, as a teacher, to evaluate and decide on the authentic texts you intend to use, on a multitude of factors.

1. Classroom Context

It is vitally important that the context of the classroom in question be considered when selecting a text. Only texts that are relevant to students should be chosen. College students in an Intensive English Program, for instance, should not be reading children's books, unless there's a very specific reason, as college students

would most certainly feel patronized if forced to read children's books. They are not children, and should be treated as such. On the other hand, a class of children, or an ESL class composed of mostly adults, who may have children of their own, might profit from going through children's books. In order to fit the classroom context, it is vital to keep the following in mind:

What are the students' ages?

What are the students' interests and goals?

What are the students' family backgrounds?

What kind of class is being taught?

2. Proficiency Level

It is just as important to make sure that, whatever text being used, it is appropriate for the proficiency level of the students. As an extreme example, a teacher should not read something like Shakespeare, in most circumstances, even for advanced students, unless they have a specific need to study classical literature. For lower proficiency levels, teachers should use something simple: short newspaper articles, or short stories by authors with a very simple writing style (Hemingway or Vonnegut, for example). For more advanced classes, it can be appropriate to read a novel, a more in-depth newspaper article, or even an academic journal article, for very high level students. On the other hand, teachers should not

pick texts that are too easy for their students either. It is important that materials presented are challenging, in the zone of proximal development (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998), as well as provide them with material they can understand. If students are not challenged, they will not progress. The difficulty, as a teacher, is in striking a balance between challenge and understandability for students. Students should be able to use the knowledge they have, to understand new material.

Pay attention to difficulty of both lexical items and grammar

Pay attention to the level of cultural knowledge that is required for readings

3. Feature Saliency

It is just as important to pick texts that highlight or feature what is being taught. If a class is focusing on teaching the usage of a preposition, the teacher must find a textual context that has as many examples of that preposition as possible. If a class is practicing skimming or scanning, the teacher needs to find texts that lend themselves to that practice. If a specific cultural feature is under examination, the teacher must find a text that makes reference to it. In a lesson about the American South, for example, students should not be reading a short story set in Illinois.

Teachers also need to make sure they provide enough, grammatically, culturally, or in terms of skills, that students can try things, or see things in a variety of different ways. Another important aspect of picking what's important lies in understanding how much material is needed. There's no reason to read through an incredibly long

text for just a small piece of information. Teachers should feel free to take what they need out of a text and teach an excerpt to avoid this, as long as the relevant context is explained as well.

Make sure the text(s) have the language feature you are teaching

Make sure the text(s) provide a variety of methods/choices/viewpoints

Make sure you teach the right amount of the text(s)

There are a great many concerns facing the language teacher intending to use authentic texts in their language classroom. These guidelines and points are all subjective to the teaching context of the students involved, however, which is the most important point to keep in mind. Different classes will need different things. The role of the teacher, therefore, is to assess the students needs in regard to authentic texts, but more generally as well, and then to meet those needs to the best of their ability. Usually, however, these authentic texts, chosen for this purpose, are not the sole textual input that students receive in the language classroom. There is always a place, sometimes unfortunately, for the textbook.

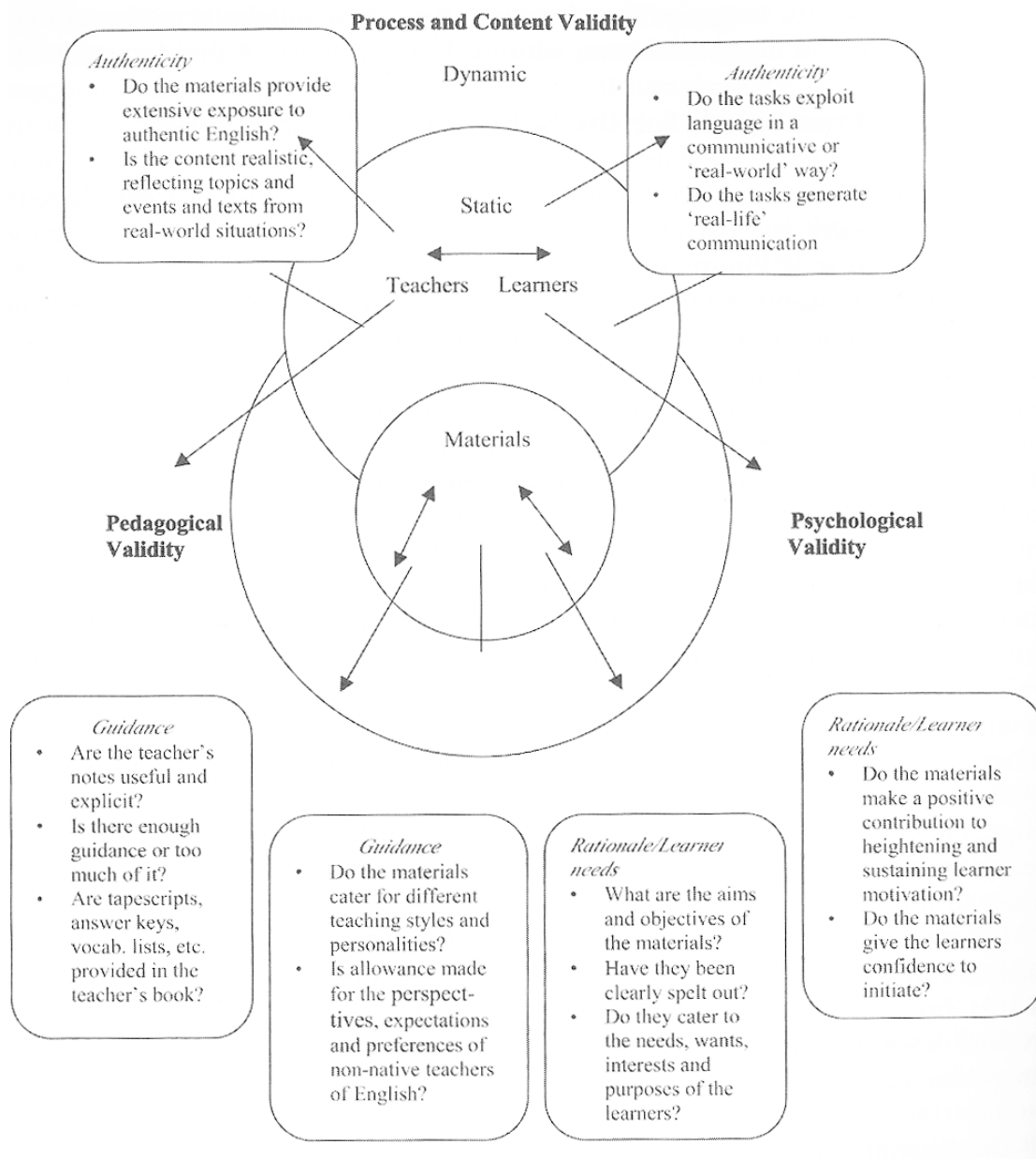


Figure 5: Rubdi's (2003) Framework for Selecting Materials

Authentic Texts and Authenticity in Texts

In choosing the textbooks for any given course, as well, attention must be paid to the authenticity of the language contained therein. It is often unfeasible to

teach a class entirely with authentic texts; thus, the authenticity of texts in language textbooks is one of the major factors that should influence their selection. Rubdi's (2003) Static & Dynamic model describes authenticity of language as a part of Process & Content Validity, providing the following questions in regard to the language in a text:

Authenticity

Do the materials provide extensive exposure to authentic English through purposeful reading and/or listening activities?

Is the content realistic, reflecting topics and events and texts from real-world situations?

Do the activities relate to pupil's interests and 'real-life' tasks?

Do the tasks exploit language in a communicative or 'real-world' way?

There are a plethora of important factors in selecting authentic texts for use in the language classroom. The three categories presented here are a summary of the most important factors to keep in mind during the process. Ultimately, the choice of what authentic texts to use in your classroom rests upon you, and upon the leader of the program where you are teaching. In a realistic context, as well, it is unlikely that the only texts that will be used in any given language classroom are completely authentic. It is up to both the teacher and the administration of any language program to make educated decisions regarding the authentic texts that will be used. Language teachers should keep in mind, as well, that the methods presented in this project are not the only ones available for the use of authentic texts for language teaching.

Alternative Approaches

In this project, I have detailed the history of teaching with authentic texts, in relation to grammar, culture, and reading skills; I have provided resources, theory, and pedagogical tools to assist in language teaching via authentic texts; and I have provided detailed information on the selection of authentic texts for use in the language classroom. I would like, before I finish, to detail a few alternative approaches to using authentic materials that I have read or seen presentations about, to show the developments currently occurring in authentic text use for language learning purposes.

Using The Internet

The onset of the internet, along with the technological leaps and bounds that have been affecting the spread of information worldwide have not escaped the language classroom. The language classroom is, more often as time passes, using the Internet in new and varied ways to teach students, (Macy, 2002). Language learners are finding texts on the Internet, both authentic and inauthentic outside of the classroom, which makes it very important to bring into the classroom, as affectively engaging activities using authentic language. From my own reading and research, these can be anything from reading blogs and forums for native speakers, to researching information or participating in chats with native speakers.

Acting

Another use of authentic texts, in this case for both a reading, speaking and a cultural perspective is acting. Plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* have seen use recently in the language classroom (Vodičková, 2006) to assist with language development and literary background. Now, it's not appropriate for language development to have students work extensively performing every scene of any play. Teachers can employ a variety of methods and activities to teach using dramatic literature.

Teaching with Corpora

Another in-vogue practice for the use of authentic texts in the language classroom is the inclusion of corpora into language teaching. At this year's TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Language) and AAAL (American Association of Applied Linguistics) conferences, there were over 5 separate sessions discussing research and pedagogy for using corpora in the classroom. Corpora, for the uninitiated, are enormous databases, of anywhere from one million to several hundred million words, taken from natural language environments. Often these can be found on university websites for free. Two notable examples of this are the Brigham Young University Corpora (<http://corpus.byu.edu>) and MICAE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English) from the University of Michigan (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/micase>). It is also possible to use concordancing

software to create corpora out of any texts that are readily available in electronic form.

The pedagogical implications of corpora are that, as a language teacher, it is now possible to find examples of grammatical forms, of vocabulary in context, and of language change through time in quantities far greater, and with much greater ease than has ever been previously possible. Language teachers can use corpora for anything from determining the difficulty of vocabulary in texts they use in class (using the home-designed corpora) to having students trace the use of a certain slang term in Time Magazine (using the BYU Corpora) or examining how a certain grammatical structure is used in real contexts. The possibilities are near limitless.

Final Notes

This project attempts to describe the most current theoretical and pedagogical approaches to language learning respective to the teaching of reading, grammar, and culture, and to provide a reasonable methodology for teaching those subjects using authentic texts. This project is limited, however in several ways. Firstly, reading, culture, and grammar are by no means the only skills in language teaching and learning, and due attention must be paid to other language skills as well, like listening, speaking, and writing. It is true that these too may be taught with the aid of authentic materials, however the scope of this project was not large enough to include them. Also, as I have stated in each chapter, teaching

environments seldom give language teachers complete freedom to choose the texts they use, and often, authentic texts can be used only as a supplement to required material, or to assist with the learning of a specific curriculum that the school promotes. Even with these limitations in mind, this project does succeed in showing examples of authentic texts in use, and hopefully in promoting their use in the language classroom.

Much research, as well, has been done on the use of authentic texts in language learning situations, and most scholars and researchers agree on their usefulness, however there is much work yet to be done. More work must certainly be done to show comparisons between the use of authentic and simplified texts, and more work must be done to show how and why students prefer authentic texts to simplified textbook language. While there is certainly enough research in existence to make the claims both that authentic and simplified texts have no advantage over each other, and that students prefer authentic texts, this idea can be shown more strongly with more research, and research needs to delve into why these things have been shown to be true.

I hope this guide to using authentic materials in the language classroom has inspired you to try some activities in your own teaching, using authentic materials. There are arguments for using authentic texts for language teaching for all purposes in the classroom. This project has shown a brief overview, but in the grand scheme of things, I have barely scratched the surface of what can be done with authentic texts. They can be very helpful, as supplement or with a teaching curriculum in

mind, for teaching Grammar, Culture, Reading, and any number of other subjects.

The goal of language learning is to understand and use authentic texts. Above and beyond that, students greatly prefer authentic texts to inauthentic ones in the language classroom (Bacon and Finneman, 1990), and students perform as well with authentic texts as with simplified ones (Young, 1999). With these facts in mind, there is no excuse to reject the use of authentic texts in the language classroom.

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